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Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Albania, Australia,* Austria,* Belgium,* Botswana, Bulgaria,* Chile,* Croatia,* Cyprus,* Czech Republic,* Denmark,* El Salvador, Estonia, Finland,* France, Germany, Greece,* Guatemala,* Hungary,* Iceland,* Indonesia, Ireland, Israel,* Italy,* Latvia, Liechtenstein,* Luxembourg,* Malta,* Mexico, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway,* Panama,* Paraguay, Peru,* Poland,* Portugal, Republic of Moldova,* Romania,* Sierra Leone, Slovakia,* Slovenia,* Spain,* Sweden,* the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Tunisia,* Turkey,* United States of America: draft resolution

30/... Equal participation in political and public affairs

The Human Rights Council,

Guided by the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,

Recalling relevant international human rights treaties, in particular the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,

Recalling also all relevant General Assembly and Human Rights Council resolutions on participation in political and public affairs, in particular Council resolutions 24/8 of 26 September 2013 on equal political participation, and 27/24 of 3 October 2014 on equal participation in political and public affairs,

Reaffirming that every citizen shall have the right and the opportunity, without any of the distinctions stipulated in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and without unreasonable restrictions, to take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives, and to have access, on general terms of equality, to public service in his or her country, as well as to vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the electors, and reaffirming also that the will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government,

* Non-member State of the Human Rights Council.

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Reaffirming also that no distinctions are permitted among citizens in the enjoyment of the right to participate in the conduct of public affairs on the grounds of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status, or on the basis of disability,

Emphasizing the critical importance of equal and effective participation in political and public affairs for democracy, the rule of law, social inclusion, economic development and advancing gender equality, as well as for the realization of all human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Reaffirming that the active participation of women, on equal terms with men, at all levels of decision-making, is essential to the achievement of equality, inclusive economic growth and sustainable development, peace and democracy,

Recognizing that the rights of everyone to freedom of expression, to peaceful assembly, to freedom of association, to education, and access to information, as well as inclusive economic empowerment, are among the essential conditions for equal participation in political and public affairs and must be promoted and protected,

Recognizing also the need for further work on the full and effective implementation of the right to participate in public affairs in the context of article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, including by identifying possible gaps in existing international guidance on the implementation of this right,

Recognizing further the need to intensify efforts to eliminate barriers in law and in practice and to actively facilitate full and effective participation in political and public affairs,

Welcoming the work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the special procedures, the treaty bodies and other relevant human rights mechanisms on identifying and addressing obstacles to the full implementation of the right to participate in public affairs,

1. *Expresses concern* that, despite progress made towards the full implementation of the right to participate in public affairs worldwide, many people continue to face obstacles, including discrimination, in the enjoyment of their right to participate in the public affairs of their countries as well as in the enjoyment of other human rights that enable it;

2. *Recognizes* that women, persons belonging to marginalized groups or minorities, and persons in vulnerable situations are among those who are most affected by discrimination in participation in political and public affairs;

3. *Reaffirms* the obligation of States to take all appropriate measures to ensure that every citizen has an effective right and opportunity to equal participation in public affairs;

4. *Notes* the emergence of new forms of participation and grass-roots engagement, in particular through new information and communications technologies and social media, and the challenges to established forms of political participation in some States;

5. *Notes with interest* the study on promotion, protection and implementation of the right to participate in public affairs in the context of the existing human rights laws, prepared by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights;[1]

[1] A/HRC/30/26

6. *Welcomes* the contributions of States and other stakeholders to the study, and notes with interest the best practices and experiences, including participatory measures and mechanisms, with respect to the implementation of the right to participate in public affairs;

7. *Invites* States to consider the best practices and experiences contained in the study when fulfilling their human rights obligations and to share their best practices and experiences in this regard at the regional and international levels, including when reporting to the United Nations human rights system, in order to facilitate full, effective and equal participation in political and public affairs;

8. *Urges* all States to ensure the full, effective and equal participation of all citizens in political and public affairs, including by, inter alia:

(*a*) Complying fully with their international human rights law obligations and commitments with regard to participation in political and public affairs, including by reflecting them in their national legislative framework;

(*b*) Considering signing and ratifying or acceding to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and other core international human rights treaties;

(*c*) Taking all necessary measures to eliminate laws, regulations and practices that discriminate, directly or indirectly, against citizens in their right to participate in public affairs on the grounds of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status, or on the basis of disability;

(*d*) Taking proactive measures to eliminate all barriers in law and in practice that prevent or hinder citizens, in particular women, persons belonging to marginalized groups or minorities, persons with disabilities and persons in vulnerable situations, from participating fully and effectively in political and public affairs, including, inter alia, reviewing and repealing measures that unreasonably restrict the right to participate in public affairs, and considering adopting, on the basis of reliable data on participation, temporary special measures, including legislative acts, aimed at increasing the participation of underrepresented groups in all aspects of political and public life;

(*e*) Taking appropriate measures to encourage publicly and promote the importance of participation of all citizens in political and public affairs, in particular women, persons belonging to marginalized groups or to minorities, and persons in vulnerable situations, including by engaging them in designing, evaluating and reviewing policies and legislation on participation in political and public affairs;

(*f*) Developing and disseminating information and educational materials on the political process and relevant international human rights law provisions to facilitate equal participation in political and public affairs;

(*g*) Taking steps to promote and protect the voting rights of all those entitled to vote without any discrimination, including facilitation of voter registration and participation and the provision of electoral information and voting papers in a range of accessible formats and languages, as appropriate;

(*h*) Exploring new forms of participation and opportunities brought about by new information and communications technologies and social media as a means to improve and widen, online and offline, the exercise of the right to participate in public affairs, and other rights directly supporting and enabling it;

(*i*) Ensuring the rights of everyone to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and freedom of association, education and development, and facilitating equal and effective access to information, media and communication technologies in order to enable pluralistic debates fostering inclusive and effective participation in political and public affairs;

(*g*) Creating a safe and enabling environment for human rights defenders and civil society organizations who, together with other actors, play a key role in the effective promotion and protection of all human rights;

(*h*) Providing full and effective access to justice and redress mechanisms to those citizens whose right to participate in public affairs has been violated, including by developing effective, independent and pluralistic national human rights institutions, in accordance with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (Paris Principles);

9. *Requests* the Office of the High Commissioner:

(*a*) To organize, prior to the thirty-second session of the Human Rights Council, an expert workshop to discuss the existing guidance on the implementation of the right to participate in public affairs with the aim of identifying possible gaps and making recommendations in this regard, as well as new developments, trends and innovations with respect to full, effective and equal participation in political and public affairs;

(*b*) To invite States, relevant United Nations bodies, funds and programmes, intergovernmental organizations, treaty bodies, special procedures, regional human rights mechanisms, civil society organizations, academia, national human rights institutions and other relevant stakeholders to participate actively in the workshop;

(*c*) To prepare a summary report on the above-mentioned workshop, including any recommendations stemming therefrom, and to submit it to the Human Rights Council at its thirty-third session;

10. *Decides* to remain seized of the matter.